HOSEA 12

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB (MT VERSING)
Ephraim Reminded	God's Anger with Judah's Sin		Israel and Judah are Condemned (11:12-12:6)	
	11:12-12:8 (1)	Rebellion and Restoration (12:1-14:9)	11:12-12:1	Political and Religious Perversity of Israel
12:1-11 (1-11)		12:1 (1)		12:1-2 (1-2)
	(2-6)	12:2-6 (2-6)	12:2-6	Against Jacob and Ephraim
			Further Words of Judgment	12:3-9 (3-9)
	12:7-8 (7-8)	12:7-9 (7-9)	12:7-9	
	12:9-14 (9-11)			Reconciliation
		12:10-14 (10-14)	12:10-11	12:10-11 (10-11)
				New Threats
12:12-14 (12-14)	(12-14)		12:12-14	12:12-14 (12-14)

READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to

following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 12:1-11

1Ephraim feeds on wind,
And pursues the east wind continually;
He multiplies lies and violence.
Moreover, he makes a covenant with Assyria,
And oil is carried to Egypt.
2The LORD also has a dispute with Judah,
And will punish Jacob according to his ways;
He will repay him according to his deeds.
3In the womb he took his brother by the heel,
And in his maturity he contended with God.
4Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed;
He wept and sought His favor.
He found Him at Bethel
And there He spoke with us,
5Even the LORD, the God of hosts,
The LORD is His name.
6Therefore, return to your God,
Observe kindness and justice,
And wait for your God continually.
7A merchant, in whose hands are false balances,
He loves to oppress.
8And Ephraim said, "Surely I have become rich,
I have found wealth for myself;
In all my labors they will find in me
No iniquity, which *would be* sin."
9But I *have been* the LORD your God since the land of Egypt;
I will make you live in tents again,
As in the days of the appointed festival.
10I have also spoken to the prophets,
And I gave numerous visions,
And through the prophets I gave parables.
11Is there iniquity *in* Gilead?
Surely they are worthless.
In Gilgal they sacrifice bulls,

Yes, their altars are like the stone heaps
Beside the furrows of the field.

12:1 "feeds. . .pursues" Both of these VERBS are *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLES, which speak of continual action.

▣ **"wind"** "Wind" (BDB 924) is a term in both Greek and Hebrew which emphasizes "emptiness" or "vanity" (e.g., Job 7:7; Eccl. 1:14,17; Isa. 41:29) as well as "spirit," "wind," or "breath." It refers to Israel's attempts to protect herself by foreign alliances (Egypt in 2 Kgs. 17:4).

SPECIAL TOPIC: BREATH, WIND, SPIRIT

▣ **"the east wind"** This probably metaphorically refers to Israel's continual political alliances with Assyria (cf. Hos. 5:13; 7:11; 8:9; 13:15; 2 Kgs. 17:3). However, it might literally refer to the sirocco desert winds that destroy the vegetation and, therefore, are a metaphor of invasion (cf. Isa. 27:8). In Jer. 18:17 and Ezek. 17:10; 19:12; 27:26 it refers to Babylonian invasion.

▣ **"He multiplies lies and violence"** Israel's lies have been a recurrent theme (cf. Hos. 12:12). See note at Hos. 7:13.

The term "multiplies," in the *Hiphil* form, is used several times in Hosea.

1. lavished (multiplied) silver and gold, Hos. 2:8
2. multiplied altars for sin, Hos. 8:11
3. multiplied fortified cities, Hos. 8:14
4. more (multiplied) altars, Hos. 10:1
5. multiplied lies and violence, Hos. 12:1
6. multiplied visions, Hos. 12:10

God's multiple gifts (#1, #6) were matched by Israel's multiplied sin!

▣ **"he makes a covenant"** The VERB "makes" is "to cut" (BDB 503, KB 500, *Qal* IMPERFECT). Covenants were originally established by cutting an animal into two parts and the covenant parties walking between them (cf. Gen. 15:17). The possible/probable etymological meaning of the Hebrew "covenant" (BDB 136) was "to cut."

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

▣ **"with Assyria"** Israel first attempted to resist Assyria, but later tried to make a political alliance with her (cf. 2 Kgs. 17:3-6).

▣ **"oil is carried to Egypt"** Israel sent "oil" (common in Israel, cf. Deut. 8:8, but not in Egypt) to Egypt as a gift to try to lure Egypt into a political alliance against Assyria (cf. 2 Kgs. 17:4).

12:2 "dispute" The term "dispute" (BDB 936) means a legal lawsuit (cf. Hos. 2:2; 4:14; Deut. 25:1; 2 Sam. 15:2,4; Micah 6:2; 7:9). Judah and Jacob are both guilty (cf. Hos. 4:9b). Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he reap (cf. Job 34:11,25; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Prov. 12:14; 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Ezek. 33:20; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-10; 2 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12). Notice this "reaping and sowing" is also seen in Hosea 8:7; 10:12-13.

12:3-4 This is a play on the names Jacob and Israel. "Jacob" is defined in Gen. 25:26 as, "one who took his brother by the heel." The term can also mean "supplanter," "usurper," or "deceiver" (BDB 784). The term "Israel" is defined in Gen. 32:28 as "one who contends with God."

Bethel was once a special holy site where Jacob (Israel) met God. Now Israel had turned it into an especially evil, idolatrous location.

▣ **"he contended with God. . .he wrestled with an angel"** These are parallel. The angel of the Lord is in view as a personal, physical representative of God Himself (cf. Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 24:7,40; 31:11,13; 48:15-16; Exod. 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19; Jdg. 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-32; Zech. 3:1-2).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

12:5 "the God of hosts" This verse has three names for the God of Israel. This is a reference to the God of Hosts, which means

1. the "captain of the armies in heaven"
2. the "head of the heavenly council" (BDB 838, e.g., 2 Sam. 5:10)
3. in Babylonian astral worship context it can refer to the stars of heaven, which they saw as supernatural beings who influenced their lives

This is the most common title for Godin the post-exilic books (cf. Amos 3:13; 6:14; and 9:5).

SPECIAL TOPIC: LORD OF HOSTS

▣ **"The LORD is His name"** This is literally "His memorial" (BDB 271). Names reveal and reflect character traits (e.g., Ps. 135:13). This refers to the name YHWH, which was revealed to Moses in Exod. 3:14. Before this time the patriarchs addressed God as *El Shaddai* (cf. Exod. 6:2-3).

SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY, D.

SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE (OT)

12:6 Here is the call to repentance again ("return" BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but functioning as a JUSSIVE). And again these special terms reappear (cf. Hos. 2:19; 4:1; 6:6; 10:12; Amos 5:24; Micah 6:8). Knowing God must result in lifestyle change that reflects His character!

▣ **"lovingkindness"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: LOVINGKINDNESS (*hesed*)

▣ **"Observe. . .wait"** These are both IMPERATIVES:

1. observe, BDB 1036, KB 1501, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. wait, BDB 875, KB 1082, *Piel* IMPERATIVE (cf. Lam. 3:25; Micah 7:7).

12:7 "A merchant" This is a word play on "Canaanite" (BDB 488 II, cf. Isa. 23:8; Ezek. 16:29; 17:4). This seems to be a reference of sarcasm. The term can mean either an ethnic group or a merchant. Israel was acting like the Canaanites (i.e., "false balances," cf. Prov. 11:1; 20:23; Amos 8:5).

▣ **"He loves to oppress"** This VERB (BDB 798, KB 897, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is used in Deut. 24:14. Oppression of the poor is not allowed among God's people (cf. Prov. 14:31; 22:16; Amos 4:1; Jer. 7:6; Ezek. 22:29; Zech. 7:10). This is the opposite of Hos. 12:6! This word is often used in a negative sense of Israel loving the wrong things (cf. Hos. 4:17-18; 10:11; 12:7; Amos 4:4-5; Micah 3:1-2).

12:8 Israel thought her dishonestly gained wealth could save her (cf. Hos. 8:14).

▣

NASB "no iniquity, which *would be* sin"
NKJV "They shall find in me no iniquity that *is* sin"
NRSV "No offense has been found in me that would be sin"
TEV "And no one can accuse us of getting rich dishonestly"

NJB "But of all his gains he will keep nothing because of the sin of which he is guilty"

The Septuagint retranslates this following some Hebrew MSS, "None of his labors shall be found *available* to him by reason of the sins which he has committed," which seems to be the indictment of the prophet or court prosecutor.

If the MT is retained Israel (i.e., Ephraim) is asserting she will never bear his guilt.

12:9 "I *have been* the LORD your God" This is the full covenant title of Israel's God (cf. Hos. 12:5; Exod. 20:2).

▣ **"I will make you live in tents again,**
As in the days of the appointed festival" This can refer to two opposite interpretations:

1. the wilderness time was seen as the ideal time between God and Israel, (cf. Hos. 2:14; 9:10; 11:1-4; Jer. 2:2; Amos 2:10)
2. in a negative sense as the Jews lived in the make-shift houses during the Feast of Booths (cf. Lev. 23:42-44), God will, in His judgment, make them live in make-shift houses on a permanent basis (opposite of Hos. 8:14)

The immediate context (i.e., Hos. 12:8) demands option #2.

12:10 "I have also spoken" This verse asserts that YHWH has adequately revealed Himself and His will to Israel through the prophets (cf. Hos. 6:5). He did this in visions and parables. He earlier had revealed Himself through His laws (i.e., the writings of Moses, cf. Hos. 4:6; 8:1,11).

The prophets were covenant mediators. They did not bring additional requirements, but turned people's thoughts back to their commitments to the ancient covenants (i.e., Abraham, the Patriarchs, Moses, David). They check the motives as well as the performance of these covenant stipulations. They draw out the current application and significance of the ancient God-given ways.

▣

NASB, NJB, JPSOA	**"parables"**
NKJV	**"symbols"**
NRSV	**"destruction"**
TEV	**"warnings"**
Peshitta	**"similitudes"**

This is probably the OT background for Jesus' use of parables (BDB 197 I). The context and emphasis is on God's active revelation in the life of Israel, but they would not listen (cf. Isa. 6:9-13). Parables both enlighten the believing and confuse the unbelieving (cf. Mark 4:10-12).

Some scholars think the Hebrew means "oracle of doom" (BDB 198 II, cf. Hos. 4:5,6; 10:7,15[twice]; NRSV, TEV).

12:11	
NASB, NRSV, NJB	**"iniquity"**
NKJV, TEV	**"idols"**
REB	**"idolatry"**
JPSOA	**"worthless"**
LXX	**"nothing"**

This is the term *awen*, which can mean "trouble," "sorrow," "wickedness," or "idolatry." The parallel in the next line, "worthless" (BDB 996), implies that both refer to idolatry (Canaanite fertility worship).

SPECIAL TOPIC: EMPTY, VAIN, FALSE, NOTHINGNESS

▣ **"Gilead"** Also see Hos. 6:8-9.

▣

NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV	**"sacrifice bulls"**
NJB	**"sacrifice to bulls"**
REB	**"sacrificed to bull-gods"**
JPSOA	**"sacrificing oxen"**
Peshitta	**"sacrificed bullocks"**

A better understanding may be "to bulls" (i.e., the golden calf replicas).

▣ **"Gilgal. . .the heap of stones"** This (BDB 164) is a play on the term "Gilgal," which means "circle of stones" (BDB 166). For that matter there may be an intentional word play between "Gilead," "Gilgal," and "stone heaps." Because of Israel's rebellion, this sacred site will be turned from a memorial to God into a heap of stones (i.e., pieces of the Ba'al pillars) and a plowed field!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 12:12-14

12Now Jacob fled to the land of Aram,
And Israel worked for a wife,
And for a wife he kept *sheep*.
13But by a prophet the LORD brought Israel from Egypt,
And by a prophet he was kept.
14Ephraim has provoked to bitter anger;
So his LORD will leave his bloodguilt on him
And bring back his reproach to him.

12:12 "Now Jacob" This seems to relate to Hos. 12:4-6, which relates to the historical life of Jacob (i.e., Israel, cf. Gen. 28-30).

12:13 "by a prophet the LORD brought Israel from Egypt" This must refer to Moses (cf. Deut. 18:15; 34:10).

12:14 The nation of Israel is not acting like Israel, but like Jacob and will bear her own sin. The blood guilt may refer to murder or child sacrifice (i.e., to Molech).

SPECIAL TOPIC: MOLECH

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